

There was no partisanship in their Committee and they developed a bill that has been endorsed by both the 9/11 Commissioners and many of the family's personally affected by the 9/11 attack.

The Democratic leader and I have worked closely together throughout this process, and I appreciate his leadership and cooperation. Now I hope we can complete the process by appointing conferees today and reaching a final agreement with the House as quickly as possible.

Mr. DASCHLE. I thank the majority leader for his kind words and for his exemplary work on this bill. Both the process and substance of the Senate bill reflect upon the best traditions of the Senate, and the Leader deserves enormous credit for that.

Our side wants to appoint conferees and send a bill to President Bush as quickly as possible. But many on our side have concerns about what will happen when we meet with the House.

The Senate bill passed by a 96–2 margin. It was, as you said, a model of bipartisan cooperation from start to finish. And every Republican Senator voted for S. 2845.

The House followed a different approach. Virtually every House Republican just voted against the bill that every Republican Senator voted for. So this could be a difficult conference.

In addition, many on our side are concerned over the pattern that's emerged in conferences with the House.

Almost a year ago Republican and Democratic Senators reached a consensus on an omnibus appropriations bill. But when we went to conference, that consensus gave way to the House demand that their position prevail. So Senate position on overtime, country-of-origin labeling, and other issues were dismissed.

Earlier this year the Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation dealing with our Nation's pension system; the House passed a bill that had no bipartisan consensus.

In that conference there was one outstanding issue regarding multi-employer pensions. And despite the bipartisan consensus in the Senate, the House again demanded that the Senate position be dropped. And it was.

Just last week, we had a conference on the FSC bill. This bill passed the Senate almost unanimously. But on critical issues dealing with FDA regulation and overtime provisions, the House conferees succeeded in demanding that the House position again prevail.

So there is considerable apprehension on our side what will happen in this conference if the House again demands that its position be accepted. All of those previous bills were important, but I think we all would agree that nothing is more important than making our country safe from attack. We have to get this bill right and the Senate bill does that.

Mr. FRIST. I have a markedly different view than Senator DASCHLE

about some of his legislative history, but I understand his concern.

We do have to get this bill right and our side is committed to that. We have to work together in conference just as we worked together in the committee and on the floor. I have talked with Senator COLLINS, who will lead the Senate conferees, and she has agreed that she will not pursue a conclusion to the conference, nor sign any conference report, that undermines the bipartisan working relationship that has existed in the Senate.

If changes are made to the Senate bill, they will be the result of the mutual, good-faith effort to reach agreement among Senate conferees. Moreover, the Democratic leader has my commitment that should the process break down due to disagreements over either substantive matters or extraneous provisions, then I will not bring a conference report to the floor.

We are prepared to make these commitments on our side, but want to be sure that we have your commitment to continue to work with us in good faith on this legislation and to complete action as quickly as possible.

Mr. DASCHLE. I thank the majority leader for his comments and assurances. For the Senate to work effectively we need to be able to rely on each other's word. We accept your word that the Senate conferees will stay together, and you have my word that we will continue to work in good faith and do everything possible to complete action on this bill as soon as possible.

As we act quickly we ought to make sure that we minimize logistical problems for the conferees.

I think we can avoid scheduling difficulties if there is at least 48 hours notice prior to meetings, and that there be an understanding that there will be ample time to meet and deliberate before decisions are made on significant matters. I hope that's acceptable to the majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. I agree that's sensible and acceptable to our side.

Mr. DASCHLE. I thank the majority leader and I am happy to yield.

Mr. KENNEDY. I appreciate the statements of both of our leaders, and I think all Members understand the importance of this conference. I particularly appreciate the desire to work in good faith on these provisions. I have noted that in the House bill there are some extraneous provisions, particularly with regard to both immigration and refugees.

There are important changes in asylum standards that turn back our tradition in terms of refugees, which has been more of an ideological position, but really it is unrelated to the challenges, to the threats. And there have also been very important provisions in terms of deportation that is to a far extent. We have not had any of those hearings on the Judiciary Committee, and those are very important issues and questions.

I thank our leaders for their willingness to say that we want to work on

what is the underlying legislation. There are extraneous issues that have been added in the House. If they were to come back and be as negative as they are in the House bill, then it seems to me that it would fail to meet the kind of standards that have been outlined in good faith.

So I thank both of our leaders for their excellent statements. I appreciate our leader raising these questions on some very substantive, important issues that are completely unrelated to the whole question of terrorism or intelligence. It would need a good deal of discussion here on the Senate floor before they were done.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts. I share his view about the importance of these matters and about the urgency with which we must work to ensure the completion of our work on the same bipartisan basis that we demonstrated to pass the bill here on the floor.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, today is a day that has taken too long to come. But it is a day of victory for hard-pressed farmers and ranchers who have been devastated by various natural disasters around the Nation. Today, we have approved \$2.9 billion in emergency relief for family farmers and ranchers across America.

From Florida to Washington State, all along the eastern seaboard and into the Midwest and upper Midwest, farmers and ranchers have faced circumstances beyond their control.

In my State of South Dakota, we have seen 5 years of drought. Farmers have gone out of business and ranchers have sold entire herds. This is not just an issue for farmers and ranch families alone, it is an issue for the rural communities in which they live as well.

In a State like mine, whose primary industry is agriculture, weather-related disasters are truly economic disasters for the entire State's population. That is why many of us have been fighting for adequate disaster assistance for so long.

When we passed the farm bill in 2002, a bill that I am very proud to have been a part of, we added a new program, the Counter-Cyclical Program. It only provides assistance to producers when prices are low. In fact, this program has now saved \$15 billion just in the last 2 years.

We said at the time we would not need any economic disaster assistance, and we have not. But we will need weather-related disaster assistance. That is something that the administration has failed to acknowledge. In fact, in 2002, in the middle of the worst drought since the Dust Bowl year of 1936, the President came to our State and told farmers and ranchers to tighten their belts, that they were not going to get any disaster assistance. That

statement stunned many of us who had witnessed firsthand the devastation that the drought had caused for farm and ranch families and the communities in which they live. As the drought persisted in 2003, we still had no opportunity for help.

Finally, in difficult negotiations over the last several weeks and with bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate, we have managed to craft disaster assistance that will go to the President for his signature. So today the Congress is now approving the \$2.9 billion in agriculture disaster assistance. That is the good news. It is a win for farmers and ranchers, and it will allow many of them to stay on the land and continue their businesses and continue a rural way of life. This bill will provide payment for farmers who have lost over 35 percent of their historic yields and livestock producers who have lost over 40 percent of their available grazing land.

I thank Congressman CHARLIE STENHOLM. We would not have any disaster aid without his leadership in the House. I thank my colleagues in the Senate, especially Senator BAUCUS, who led a bipartisan group of Senators, all of whom supported disaster aid and worked to pass this important legislation.

I also thank Senator HARKIN for his passionate support for the recognition that this aid ought to be declared an emergency like all other forms of assistance that we have passed for other parts of the country.

America's family farmers and ranchers do not just produce commodities, they produce communities. They are an important part of our national identity. They reflect our national values. For too long, they have been suffering, not because they made bad decisions but because of bad weather. We cannot do anything about the weather, but we can take steps to help family farmers and ranchers weather this crisis.

So I am proud of what we have been able to do today, and I hope the USDA will immediately begin the process of distributing this much needed assistance to farmers and ranchers across the Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

NATIVE HAWAIIANS

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I want to take just a couple minutes to engage three of my colleagues in a brief colloquy: Senators INOUE, Senator AKAKA, and Senator DOMENICI, to inform our colleagues of an agreement that was reached in an effort to clear a group of bills that the Energy and Natural Resources Committee had worked on very hard and very long, for a long period of time, and have, in fact, cleared the Senate and been sent to the House, and to ensure that at some point next year, before August 7, a bill relating to native Hawaiians, similar

to or the same as S. 344, would be considered by this body.

We reached that agreement, which was embodied also in a letter from the two leaders to Senators DOMENICI and INOUE, who had inquired of that possibility, in which the leaders promised their best efforts to ensure that a native Hawaiian bill equivalent to S. 344 would be brought to the Senate floor for debate and resolution no later than August 7 of next year.

I had told both Senators from Hawaii I would express publicly my personal commitment to assist in that effort to ensure that no procedural roadblocks would be thrown in the way of the consideration of that legislation, nor a final vote on it. I will indeed do that and encourage all of my colleagues to work with us toward that end.

I thank Senator DOMENICI for his leadership on that large group of bills that were so important to so many Members of this body and for his work on this particular issue, as well as our good friends from Hawaii, Senators AKAKA and INOUE, for their cooperation in helping us reach this resolution.

Mr. DOMENICI. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. KYL. I am happy to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I note that Senator AKAKA and the distinguished senior Senator from Hawaii are on the floor. First, I want to say they have been gracious. Many Senators had a part in this very major bill, with 24, 28, maybe even 30 pieces of legislation for their States.

I say to the Senators from Hawaii, you had a perfect right to insist that your bill, which has just been described by the distinguished Senator from Arizona, be in that bill. That could have caused the bill to probably be here a long time, the big bill, and you graciously said, if we can work something else out, let's try. We did.

As a result, we passed this bill for many Senators, and we said to you, both Senators from Hawaii, we will do our best to get your very important bill, described by the Senator from Arizona, up. We cannot assure that. I cannot guarantee that. This is the Senate. But we do have a letter with all of the people who are in the leadership, I, myself, by the distinguished two Senators from Arizona, that we will do our best. We described it and everyone knows of it.

Today we thought we would tell the Senate and give this assurance in the RECORD to our two Senators from Hawaii that we are serious, that we will do our part in trying to make sure their bill comes to a vote in the Senate by the date they have agreed to and we have agreed to.

I say to Senator KYL, I thank you for your diligent efforts in helping with this. Every Senator who got something in that legislation that is now going to the House will know what we have done.

Thank you very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I am extremely grateful for those reassuring words of my distinguished friend from Arizona and my distinguished friend from New Mexico. We look forward to working with them next year on this most important bill, a bill for the native Hawaiians.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Senator KYL particularly and also to Senator DOMENICI for working with us on our Hawaiian bill. Especially I want to express my gratitude for your grace and your commitment for next year. Again, I want to do this, as we say in Hawaii, with much aloha.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I may, everyone is anxious to speak today. We have an order entered. Senator HARKIN is willing to give up his time of 45 minutes. He will do the bulk of his time after basically everyone has completed their statements today. In exchange for that, I ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to speak after Senator KENNEDY for 10 minutes and then his hour and 50 minutes would be at the end of the day. I think that is fair. I appreciate everyone's patience. Also following Senator CANTWELL, Senator BYRD on our side, will be recognized for 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

CHRISTOPHER REEVE

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I would like to express my deep sorrow that many of my colleagues and many millions of Americans share over the loss of Christopher Reeve a remarkable individual who, as a result of a tragic paralyzing injury that he suffered while horseback riding, dedicated his last 10 years to making a positive difference. Rather than wallowing in his own misery and sorrow, he used those 10 years to inspire and change America in terms of our attitudes and perceptions about people with such serious injuries and disabilities. I know that we will miss him very much. We have admired him immensely for his courage and dedication.

I express my condolences to his family. I wish to express the deep sorrow I feel over the loss of someone I knew not terribly well, yet someone I had the pleasure of meeting on a number of occasions.

Some of my colleagues, particularly Senators HARKIN and KENNEDY, knew him better than I and may express their own views on the subject. It was a sad day for America to lose this courageous individual. I hope his message on a number of subject matters, not